Cultiples #1:

Tristan Grey/Desiree Hämm

by LB Lee

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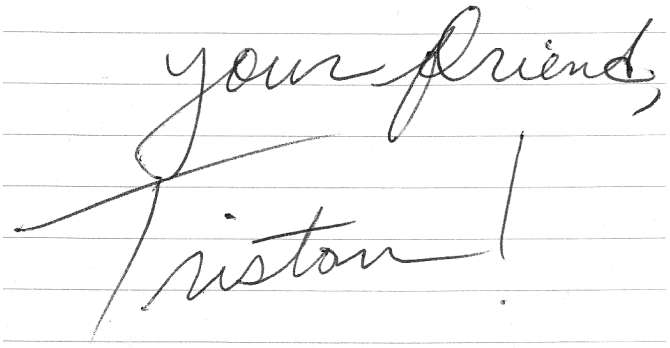


Terminology 101

Hi everybody! Before we begin, here's some vocabulary words, just to make sure everyone's on the same page...

Multiple: the state of being more than one person in a body. More commonly known as 'multiple personality,' though we don't care for the term. Multiples may see themselves as suffering from a mental illness, channeling spiritual entities, or merely having a different psychological or neurological makeup. There's a lot of variety!

Plural: umbrella term for multiples and multiple-ish folks.

Singlet: someone who isn't multiple.

System: a name for a multiple group as a whole. For instance, LB Lee is the name of our system. Our system members are Sneak, M.D., etc.

Cult: a group orbiting around a charismatic leader with a specific philosophy. This leader uses that philosophy to control and abuse their followers, squeezing them for resources (usually money, sex, or devotion). They are characterized by hiding their true beliefs until someone is already hooked, making it obscenely difficult to leave, and being highly authoritarian—a cult leader demands utter unquestioning obedience, though they will often claim otherwise in public.

A cult is not necessarily the same as a fringe religious belief—it's not the strangeness of the beliefs that define a cult, but the control and abuse within it. Some cult leaders don't focus on religion at all, building instead around fandom, business skills, even random things like cat hoarding. However, the philosophy rarely makes much sense, since it only exists to control the followers and prop up the leader.

The stereotypical cult is a large organization, like Scientology or the Moonies. But most of the cults in *Cultiples* are very small—at best only having a few dozen followers. They can sometimes resemble an abusive relationship more than a cult, except for the philosophy that binds everyone together.

I hope that clears up all confusion! Let's go!

The Charismatic Leader

It is unsettling to me how incredibly common a certain kind of charismatic person is in plural/fandom circles. They turn up online and promptly start creating a lot of creative work or discussion that other people find interesting. They make friends and fans.

Then they start building a religious mythos. Maybe they claim to be a shaman or prophet; maybe they build an entire religion around their fandom of choice. Regardless, the mythos starts bleeding into reality. The fun is no longer just a book or a roleplaying game; there is something deeper going on, something of cosmic significance.

They start seeking out followers who have always wished for a letter to Hogwarts, the Doctor in a police booth, that special wardrobe to Narnia. The charismatic person then *becomes* that escape from the humdrum world, spurring these impulses to a frenetic height, causing an instant powerful bond. Only they know the True Secrets hidden within the media they consume, the games they play. It gives a whole new layer to reality, makes the world magical and meaningful... as long as the followers stay with this charismatic person. If they leave, the sparkle is gone.

In the absence of true affection or attachment, the affection and attachment to the game, the fandom–the mythos–will work. The charismatic leader now has people under control.

Now is when online becomes offline. The charismatic person starts meeting their followers in person. They might move in together. Often there will be one or two people who get in especially deep, usually sexually or romantically, who are the other half of their *folie a deux* for years and sometimes never escape. Other people will eventually get drained by the constant world-saving and astral battles and get burned out or thrown out.

Disturbing as it is, this is a pretty common thing. Back in 2014, I lived with two roommates, and all of us had independently encountered completely different people doing this, with varying levels of success and in completely different areas of the country. I came out the luckiest; the worst I suffered was hurt feelings.

Others? Not so lucky...

The Grand Purpose

Folks like to make fun of people who get taken in by cults, but the thing is, I totally understand why people get sucked in. We very well could've become one of them, under different circumstances. We ran into three cultish multiples within our first *month* joining the community. We were young, vulnerable, isolated and afraid. Had we been less lucky...

See, when first dealing with something like plurality, it causes a huge reality shift. Everything becomes really uncertain, and what folks often need most is reassurance and an explanation. Are they going crazy? Can they have a fulfilling life? Will things be okay?

Cult leaders step up to fill this need. They take advantage of that time of uncertainty. When Cult Leader Bob stays up all hours of the night with someone, reassuring and validating them, (and recruiting and grooming them) of *course* he'll inspire devotion.

When in a huge life transition like that, it's *so tempting* to mistake difference for specialness, love-bombing for true care. It's a pretty easy transition from, "am I crazy?" to "no, it's okay," to, "actually, I am intended for great things," to, "I am here to help Bob in his mission to liberate humanity."

Imagine the kind of ego crash that comes from being convinced you are here for a grand, important reason... and then realizing it was all a con. Imagine being a leader surrounded by followers who are absolutely convinced of your own importance, and having to lose that reverence.

I've noticed that a lot of these cult leaders seem to start young—in their teens. Often times, their cults are the most successful parts of their lives! Which is why I kinda doubt they will ever stop. I think they get hooked on that adoration, and can't bear the thought of quitting and settling for ordinary human mediocrity.

If they didn't use people so nastily, I'd feel sorry for them.

The Rapes and Kidnappings of Tristan Grey

This is the first part of the story of our experiences as the penpal of Tristan Grey, the system that is currently in jail for kidnapping and raping teenage girls. (His legal name is Desiree Hämm, but since nobody in the system went by that name and Tristan seems to be the one who did the crimes, I will call him by that name, especially since the early newspaper articles called him 'Tristan.')

How We Met

We met Tristan through a penpal prison program in the summer of 2014; Sneak was the one who wrote them. After we disclosed our plurality, Tristan did as well. Tristan's headmates were named Morgan, Mercy, Nikola, Jullian, and Zerra, but we overwhelmingly heard from Tristan, and occasionally from Morgan, who also went by the name Echo (Grey, Personal communication, 10/21/14).

At the time, Sneak did not look up why Tristan et al were in prison. Ze felt that zer job was to be a penpal, not a judge, and that if he wanted to tell us, he would.

Asides from being plural, Tristan also claimed to be Native American--specifically Jicarilla Apache. He claimed his multiplicity was an extension of their spiritual beliefs. All of this turned out to be total bunk; he made basic linguistic errors about Jicarilla, claimed totally incorrect things about their religious system, and all court documentation for this system that I could find listed them as white.

At the time, I felt slight suspicion. But Sneak didn't think to check his claims, and ze didn't want to shut down zer penpal on the second letter. So ze didn't challenge him.

Sneak wrote to Tristan until the start of 2017. In mid-January, he sent us a card telling us that ours were the only letters he received, and that he was lonely. He asked us to find him more penpals.

At first, Sneak agreed, but the more ze thought about it, the more responsible ze felt for anyone we might connect with Tristan. We finally looked up why Tristan was in jail.

We always knew that he may have been incarcerated for doing terrible things. We were ready for murder or sexual assault. But it was worse than that.

The Kidnappings

Tristan's victims were two teenage sisters who I'll call Big Sister and Little Sister. They lived near New Braunsfels, Texas, and Big Sister first met Tristan through online roleplaying when she was thirteen. He used the name 'Tristan' or 'Tristan Grey' as his screename; she used 'Snow.' The RP was apparently dark and gory, involving vampires and paganism. Like with us, Tristan claimed to be an Indian shaman.

The girls' mother, Ms. F, was initially supportive of the hobby. "We moved around a lot for work, so I thought it would help her stay in touch with people and could be a creative outlet," she was reported as saying. She also described Big Sister as "very intelligent and very mature," which might've been why she was lax with parental oversight—she didn't even notice the enormous phone bills her daughters later racked up (Appendix A).

Poorly supervised, isolated, young, and lonely, Big Sister was in the perfect position to be snatched up for an online roleplaying cult. And she helped pull Little Sister in later; their mother reported that Little Sister was "very excited when [Big Sister]'s online friends accepted her." (Appendix A)

The newspapers don't talk much about the roleplaying, but I suspect that after Tristan got the girls emotionally invested, he pulled the classic move of claiming that the game was real. The roleplaying spread into online chatting and phone calls as time went on and steadily took over more and more of the girls' lives and identities. Big Sister became convinced that she was Snow. "We really think [Big Sister] has kind of become delusional, and she equates herself with the Internet character that she has created," her mother reported later (Smith, "Family seeks answers about missing teens").

In December, 2009, the girls spent over 9000 minutes on the phone with Tristan. They spent most of their Christmas break on the computer, not interacting much with friends or family. Frustrated, their parents took Big Sister's computer away, which enraged her. She accused her parents of taking her friends away from her, and that her

online friends were her true ones. Finally, at the end of winter break, her parents relented and gave the computer back (Appendix B).

The attempt to unplug the girls only intensified the process—perhaps Tristan worried that if he didn't move quickly, he might miss his chance. In January 2010, the sisters racked up over 11,000 minutes of phone conversations with Tristan—averaging roughly six hours a day. He also sent them boxes of gifts (Appendix B). It was probably during this time that Tristan was persuading them to come to California to meet him in person.

His efforts were successful. The sisters emptied their bank accounts, bought disposable cell phones, and gathered their passports, Social Security cards, and health and school records. On February, 11, 2010, they disappeared into the night (Appendix C). The sisters were fifteen and sixteen at the time.

The sisters didn't take the family car. Instead, a middle-aged woman named Sara Theresa Nadeau drove all the way from California to Texas to pick the girls up (Larson, "California woman indicted as co-conspirator in kidnapping"). It's unclear whether Tristan was with her or not; different articles said different things. I'm not certain what Nadeau's relationship to him was either, whether she was a follower, a girlfriend, or a fellow predator. Regardless, she apparently kept the sisters in a car trunk on the drive to San Diego, and then locked them in an apartment "used by a coven of witches," according to their uncle. I presume he means Tristan's roleplaying shamanism cult (Smith, "Woman indicted on kidnapping counts").

For a month, the sisters' family stewed in terror. They made a Facebook group. Many newspaper articles were posted, spreading the word of the missing girls, and in the very first one, a week after the kidnappings, Tristan was mentioned as calling the girls' family. The details are vague; the girls' mother, Ms. F, only reports, "This person has not been completely forthcoming with us. She keeps feeding us tidbits." (Appendix C)

Tristan didn't stop calling either, even after the cops told Ms. F to stop speaking to him (Appendix A). He asked how he could help. He also spoke with their lawyer and the cops. He claimed to have been role-playing with Big Sister for three years "and they had developed their own 'online language'" (Shettig, "Woman indicted in sisters' disappearance"). It's unclear if he was trying to cover his tracks,

or just taunting the family. Regardless, it backfired on him; they were suspicious of him from the start, and now it only made things worse.

In early March, the girls called their family, but they wouldn't say where they were, only that they were okay. They claimed that Big Sister had gotten a job as a waitress and were paying rent in an apartment, but the family was rightfully dubious (Smith, "Girls reveal little during phone calls to family").

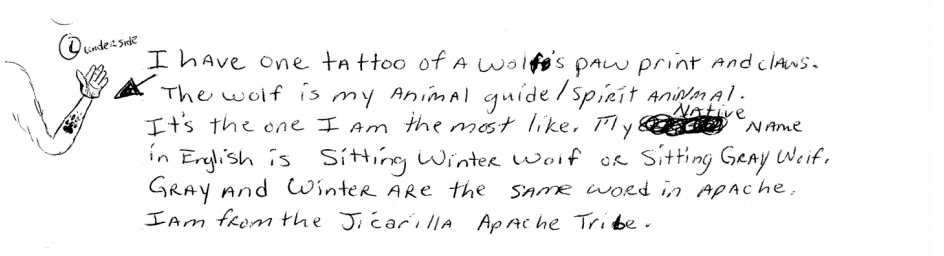
In March, they put warrants out for Tristan's arrest. The family bought the girls plane tickets home, and the sisters returned to Texas (Appendix D). It was March 16, 2010, just over a month since their disappearance, and it was not a happy reunion.

"When the girls heard the news [about the warrants] they got very, very mad. They came home thinking that maybe that would lead to the warrants being vacated," their uncle explained. The sisters refused to speak to their parents or return home, staying instead with other relatives. "The girls blame [Ms. F] for getting 'their best friend' in trouble with the law," their uncle claimed (Appendix E). Their mother, in the meantime, reported, "I think that they are living in a fantasy world, convinced by all their role-playing on the Internet...There's going to have to be a lot of counseling" (Lloyd, "Runaway sisters from Spring Branch return to Texas").

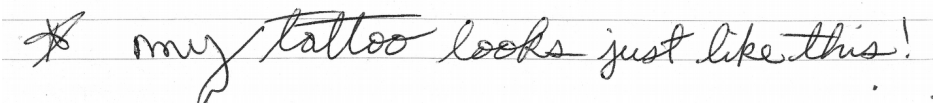
The girls' attempt to protect Tristan failed. He was arrested on March 19, 2010, and extradited from Fresno to Texas on April 8th (Lucio, "Woman charged with kidnapping, sexual assault"). In June, he was indicted for unlawful restraint, but the ensuing detective investigation made darker things come to light (Shettig, "Woman indicted in sisters' disappearances").

While being investigated, the girls accused Tristan of molesting them and forcing them to perform sexual acts upon each other while in California. (This led to the early news articles being deleted from the Internet; see appendices for details.) On top of that, their uncle claimed that "the girls were branded with a hot iron during their time in captivity and left with a mark similar to a tiger's paw" (Smith, "Woman indicted on kidnapping counts").

I would bet good money that it wasn't a tiger's paw, but a wolf's. Tristan told us he had a tattoo of a wolf's paw on his forearm, because the wolf was his spirit animal. He also drew pictures of it in his letters to us, included here.


I have one tattoo of a wolf's paw print and claws.
The wolf is my animal guide/spirit animal.
It's the one I am the most like. My Native name
in English is Sitting Winter Wolf or Sitting Gray Wolf.
Gray and Winter are the same word in Apache.
I am from the Jicarilla Apache Tribe.

(Personal Correspondence, 9/23/2014)



(Personal Correspondence, 9/3/2015)

Seeing Tristan's bogus claims to Native American spirituality and the link between that and his cult, the branding seems more likely to involve the wolf, rather than the tiger. Perhaps he was marking the girls as his property.

As more and more information about the sexual abuse came to light, Tristan got into deeper and deeper trouble. After six months of therapy, the girls seemed to have snapped out of his conditioning, and the family seemed determined to press charges. Tristan pled guilty to four counts of sexual performance by a child, two counts of aggravated kidnapping, and seven counts of sexual assault in August 2011, and was sentenced to 20 years in prison, followed by ten years of

probation. He will be released in 2030 (Moultrie, “Hamm pleads guilty to several sex-related crimes”).

For completion's sake, I will also note that Sara Theresa Nadeau pled guilty to two counts of aggravated kidnapping (Moultrie, “Woman pleads guilty in kidnapping case”). She was sentenced to five years in prison, has since got out, and is now a registered sex offender living in Auburn, Maine, and working at Dunkin Donuts (Maine Sex Offender Registry). I don't know what her relationship to Tristan was; he was only 22, while she was in her late thirties, and he never mentioned her in any of his letters or photos. Their court documents also show them as having different addresses—Tristan was from San Diego, Nadeau from Fresno, a good five hours away. Maybe she was part of whatever pagan cult existed. I suppose I'll never know.

Snookered

So, that was quite a shock to find out about our penpal. There are a million ways a person can end up in prison, and while we had considered murder or rape, we did not predict this.

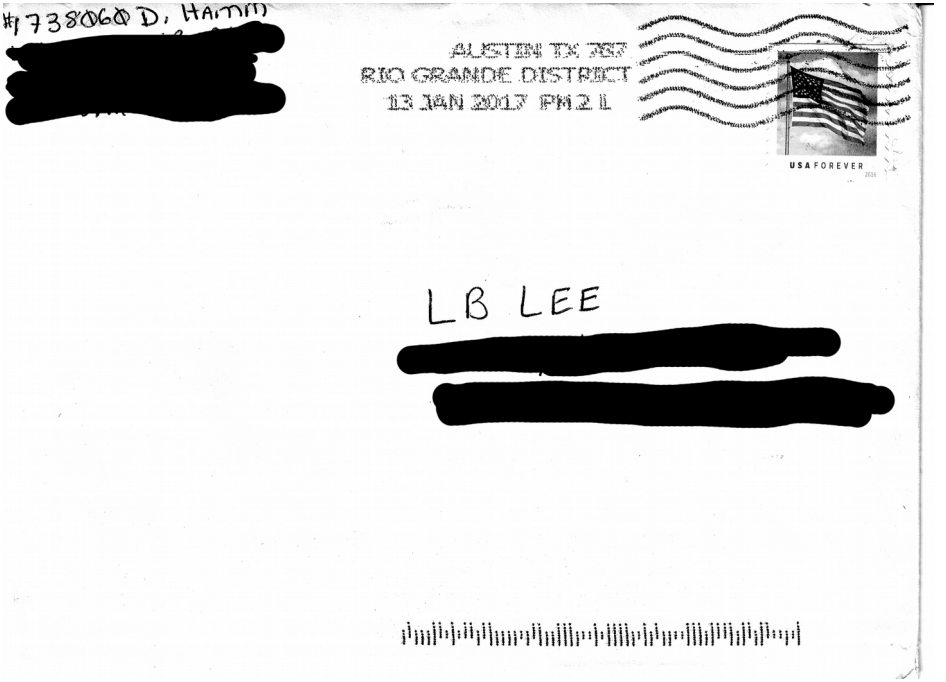
Sneak was horrified and immediately knew ze could not in good faith connect Tristan to fellow plurals and find him new penpals directly. Instead, ze considered disclosing what ze knew and then telling people about his penpal listing so people could make their own choice. That way, ze would feel less afraid of tricking folks.

Sneak went in search of the listing, only to discover it was gone. We contacted the penpal organization, who informed us that they had removed Tristan's listing because it was their policy to do so if someone had over three penpals. Tristan, contrary to what he'd told us, had over twenty.

Sneak realized that we had been duped. We sent him one final letter asking him not to contact us again, and informed the penpal organization of his behavior and our decision. That was February 9, 2017. We had been Tristan's penpal for roughly two and a half years.

After a few days to get over the shock, we set ourselves to looking through our stuff for all the letters of Tristan's that we still retained. There were roughly fifteen of them, and we read through them all at once, searching for hints of his nature that we had missed.

In hindsight, and reading the letters all together instead of spread out over the space of years, there were indeed warning signs. Lots of them, actually...



The Tactics of Tristan Grey

Tristan Grey was a skilled emotional manipulator. He tried to persuade us that he had magical powers, that he could speak to the dead, that he had these powers and his plurality because he was Indian. He tried to hit on the youngest member of our system, and use his own multiplicity to avoid taking any responsibility or flack for it. That it took us so long to recognize his nastiness is embarrassing, but hopefully it will serve a useful purpose. Perhaps other people can learn from our own vulnerabilities to protect themselves from tactics like his in the future.

A note before we begin: I will be taking on lots of Tristan's bunk claims, but I'm not going to waste my time debating his multiplicity. I usually find such things a masturbatory distraction from predators' actions, which are far more important and much easier to prove. It doesn't matter whether Tristan was truly multiple or not; what matters is that he is a predatory child molester.

All right, onward!

Teenage Girlfriends

Tristan favored teenaged victims, and he liked them geeky, smart, "mature," and unworldly. His two New Braunsfels victims were fifteen and sixteen at the time of their kidnapping, and that age seems to be his preferred target—we experienced it for ourself. He focused special attention on our youngest system member, M.D., when she was the same age.

Now, M.D. is not the most unworldly of us, nor is she the youngest-looking, but Tristan had no way of knowing that. She was the only system member with a professed age younger than eighteen, so perhaps he assumed she would be the easiest target. He also might've found her particularly interesting because she had a history involving death that would've played nicely into his spiritual philosophy.

Regardless, within about nine months of first meeting her, he made his move—or rather, his headmate Echo did. She wrote M.D.

specifically to tell her, "my brother seems to think you are the bee's knees and hung the moon." "My brother has a crush on you... He need (sic) a lovelife (sic) its (sic) just part of his makeup... try to be nice even if you dont (sic) like him like that" (Personal correspondence, 9/3/2015).

This has a couple layers of creepiness. Besides the obvious grossness of a twenty-seven-year-old man crushing on a sixteen-year-old, there's a specific social trap that's multi-specific. By having his headmate express his feelings to M.D., Tristan could avoid responsibility for them. Even though he had previously claimed that his system did not have uncontrolled switches, he staged Echo's actions as a dramatic surprise, and implied that M.D. was special because of it (Personal correspondence, 11/11/14). "My twin likes you," he wrote. "She said to tell you she'll be writing you seperately (sic) later. To be honest that freaks me out. She doesn't talk to many people" (Personal correspondence, 9/3/2015). Since Echo was hardly ever around, it wasn't as though M.D. could call her out. And since Tristan claimed total ignorance, manners dictated that M.D. couldn't call him out either.

This ended up failing; M.D. has no manners. She shot him down anyway. Since she's aggressively asexual, and her old system job involved driving off unwanted suitors, she felt absolutely no guilt or pressure to do anything else. However, a teenager without that history, one who perhaps liked Tristan back, might not have recognized the trick and been taken in. They might've felt obligated to play along, or worse, returned his feelings, which he would've exploited. As he told M.D. later, "When you love someone their age, looks, race, ect... (sic) stop mattering" (Personal correspondence, 11/13/2015).

Tristan did write things in his letters like, "Rape is never a choice for anyone," but it was obvious that he didn't truly believe it, seeing his actions (Personal correspondence, 11/11/2014). He even might have written about the kidnapped sisters to us, rewriting their sexual abuse and captivity in his apartment as a polyamorous relationship. "When I was out in the world I had more than one partner," he wrote. "I lived with the 2 of them, same apt., some bed, all in one multiple person romantic relationship" (Personal correspondence, 10/21/2014). We don't know if it was the sisters or

some other people, since he never named them, but still creepy. It's possible he was even specifically testing us, to see if we'd question his ethics.

Even though Tristan said he always had multiple partners, he showed resentment about dating polyamorous people. In one letter, he sent us a photo of an ex (thankfully not either of the sisters), and wrote, "She was a poly which was and is the only type of person I can ever seem to date. Which sucks! I have a hard time with this, as does Nikola, but Morgan has stepped back from dating" (Personal correspondence, 11/11/2014). At the time, Sneak didn't understand why he'd complain, since he seemed so intensely non-monogamous himself, but perhaps he simply didn't like extending his own privileges to his partners.

He also may not have liked that his partners weren't completely attached to him alone. Which leads us to his next tactic.

Loyalty and Love-Bombing

Tristan's treatment of his victims suggests that he specialized in breaking up people's most important relationships and reattaching those bonds to himself. The girls only returned home "so that their friend in California would not get into trouble," according to their mother (Lloyd, "Runaway sisters from Spring Branch return to Texas"). This shows that they cared more about Tristan's well-being than their mother's concern for them. Afterward, they refused to return home or even speak to their mother, and their uncle reported the girls blaming her for Tristan getting into trouble (Appendix E). I suspect that Tristan persuaded them to believe this, treating himself as an innocent victim and her as the attacker. Perhaps the girls' devotion wasn't enough; he wanted to sever their other relationships too.

Tristan never tried to turn us against each other in that way, but he certainly tried to inspire loyalty, and he certainly tried to get very close to us very quickly. By his third letter to us, he was saying things like, "Have you ever met someone who just seemed to <u>melt</u> into part of you? --you have seemed to have done this to me" (Personal correspondence, 10/21/2014). He quickly moved onward to, "Know we're here for you all and will stand by you no matter what. If you need us we are just a letter away" (Personal correspondence,

12/10/2014). In his next letter, he said, "You help me keep my head on straight and I am glad I have you guys in my world. I wouldn't know what to do without all of you. Your letters help more than just a little, they help me tons, more than I could ever tell" (Personal correspondence, 1/22/2015).

Tristan also liked to talk about the importance of loyalty and honesty. In his second letter, he told us, "I promise to be honest with you always. Lieing[sic] doesn't build it breaks." In the exact same letter, he was blatantly lying about being Native American (Personal correspondence, 9/23/2014). This was probably intended to test us, to see whether we would catch him in a lie or call him out on it. He acted as though we were special, that he rarely gave his loyalty to anyone, that we had proven ourselves to him. “Trust is hard for me to give. But once you have it I am loyal as to a fault” (Personal correspondence, 9/3/2015).

All of this fawning attention was probably meant to instill reciprocal devotion and loyalty. In this, he failed—Sneak thought he/they were merely happy to meet another plural, so never returned the intense interest. We weren't isolated like his previous victims; we had many friends, plural and singlet, so Tristan wasn't anything special. All his talking about loyalty did was make him look creepily overenthusiastic.

But I imagine that a younger plural, one who was more isolated and desperate for someone to trust, would’ve been far more taken in. A lot of multiples are aching to find someone like them, and Tristan did his damnedest to insure he was as much like us as possible.

Shared History

Tristan claimed we shared a great deal in common. Besides being trans (which was most definitely true) and plural (which might've been true or not), he also claimed to share a disability and a history of incest with us. He expressed rage at people who victimize children, called perpetrators of incest “COLD” and “heartLESS,” apparently unaware of the irony (Personal correspondence, 9/3/2015). He generally tried to act as though we were comrades in a battle against the wrongdoing of the world.

Of course, his claims were empty buzzwords and bluster. But had we not long since learned that victimhood does not preclude perpetration, we very well might have bought in to the idea that he was an ally. He might've convinced us that he understood us and shared in our struggles.

Tristan wanted us to believe that we were in it together, that we shared identities and thus ethical concerns. But there's no reason to believe that is true. Even if we did have a lot in common, even if it were all true, it only makes his actions more heinous. Someone who has survived child abuse should know more than anyone the damage it can do, and know better than to repeat the process.

But I suspect he may have hoped to use this shared history to support more mystical claims.

I Hear Dead People

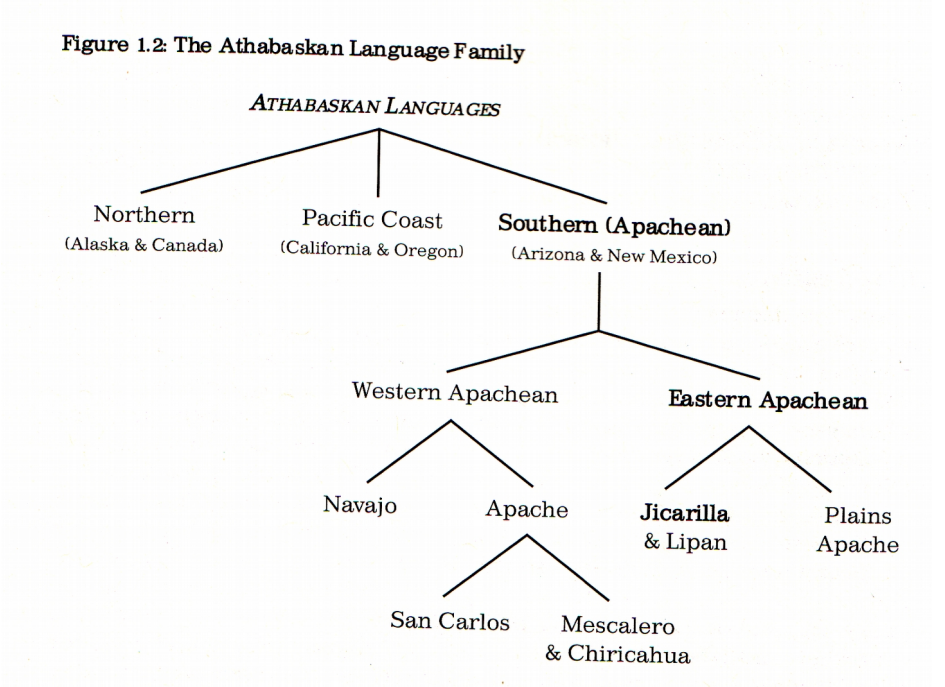
From almost the start, Tristan claimed to be able to hear and see ghosts. He discussed his plurality as an extension of these beliefs--every system member was a deceased relative. Tristan himself claimed to be Morgan's twin, who was absorbed in the womb. Mercy and Nikola were both sisters who died, while Julian and Zerra were the system's own miscarried children. I have absolutely no idea whether any of this is true.

He wrapped all of this together with his claims of being Jicarilla Apache—taking advantage of our ignorance and hoping we wouldn't fact-check him. But he wasn't the magical Indian shaman he claimed to be at all. He legal documents list him as white, and Tristan himself ruined his own claims by blatantly lying. In his second letter, he claimed, "my Native Name in English is Sitting Winter Wolf or Sitting Gray Wolf. Gray and Winter are the same word in Apache" (Grey, Personal communication, 9/23/14). None of this is true.

Proving his claims false required a fair amount of effort. In all our extended library system, only one had a Jicarilla dictionary, buried in the closed stacks. Perhaps Tristan assumed we wouldn't be stubborn enough to go to the trouble of disproving him. He was wrong.

First of all, there are multiple Apachean languages, of which Jicarilla is only one; the language known as plain 'Apache' is a different

branch of the linguistic family tree, not even the closest linguistic relative to Jicarilla, as shown in the diagram below, from Phone, Olson, and Martinez's *Dictionary of Jicarilla Apache: Abáachi Mizaa Ilkee' Siijai*, 2007.



Second, Jicarilla is a complex language, not like English in the least. It doesn't seem to have independent adjectives the way English does, but uses them as stems that modify verbs. 'Gray' has the verb stem, *-bá*. The word 'it's gray' is *libá*. 'Winter,' however, is a stand-alone noun, *hai*. So not only are the words completely different, they're completely different parts of speech, used in completely different ways (Phone, Olson, and Martinez, *Dictionary of Jicarilla Apache: Abáachi Mizaa Ilkee' Siijai*, 2007).

Finally, Tristan claimed that because of his culture, his system grew up in a family where seeing and hearing the voices of the dead was a normal, celebrated thing, and that their grandmother (now deceased) did it too (Personal correspondence, 9/23/14). The thing is, the Jicarilla Apache do not see the dead as pleasant visitors. In fact, they're seen as evil and vengeful, a distillation of all the deceased's frustrations, to be avoided at all costs. They can also cause physical

illness by proximity. So speaking to the dead would *not* be a positive experience, or a revered skill (Jicarilla - Religion and Expressive Culture, 2017).

Why would Tristan claim to be Jicarilla? Perhaps he wanted to seem exotic, or supernatural, utilizing stereotypes of the magically spiritual Indian. Since Jicarilla dictionaries are hard to track down, he might've presumed his words would never be checked. Maybe he thought that he'd be more impressive as a Jicarilla shaman than as a New Age white cult leader. If so, he was wrong. While Sneak didn't contest his claims, ze wasn't particularly interested in them either.

Tristan was pretty insistent on it, though. Asides from building his system off these spiritual beliefs, he'd try to convince us that he had supernatural powers and had a special bond to us. At one point, when sharing with him a strange and annoying occurrence, he responded, "You can feel me wincing cause friend we got that BOND like that we know each other" (Personal correspondence, Spring 2016). We, of course, didn't believe this; we had no special attachment or bond to him; he was just a penpal. But Tristan obviously wanted us to believe otherwise.

Over time, he read some of our comics, though often with long delays. After reading *All In The Family* part 1 and 2 (our incest memoir diary comic), he tried to persuade us that our father had attacked us by claiming a ghost told him these things. He wrote, "there was more than just you hurt and someone that was hurt can't speak for themself unless she choose to come back, but I doubt that maybe one day" (Personal correspondence, 9/3/2015).

It is a gross breach of boundaries to try and convince someone that a relative abused them. In my opinion, nobody should ever do that under any circumstances, even if it is true. And Tristan was not a trusted friend whose opinion we asked on the matter; he came up with that himself, and used it specifically to try and bolster his claims of supernatural ability.

In *All In The Family*, we use ghosts as metaphors for lost memories (and our mind uses them psychologically for the same purpose). But they aren't literal, actual ghosts. They're psychological symptoms of our own mental illness, of which *All In The Family* is a chronicle. So Tristan was specifically leveraging our mental illness to

try and loosen our grip on reality and get us to believe supernatural bunk.

This didn't work on us, for a few reasons. First, he was rambling enough that we didn't understand what he was saying; it went over Sneak's head, and we'd forgotten the incident entirely until rereading the letters for this zine. Second, by that point we had a pretty strong grip on how our mind and illness worked. We knew what the apparitions were, and that they were psychological, not supernatural, in origin.

And finally, due to the time lapse between letters and our publishing schedule, Tristan didn't know that we had already long since figured out for ourself our father's role in the whole business. But had we been less certain in ourself, more spiritual in bent, and had Tristan had better timing, we very well might have believed him. He very well might've roped us into believing he had magical powers. I can easily see that working on isolated teenagers, especially ones who secretly yearn for a magical world.

No Shame

One other thing about Tristan. He never mentioned any of his crimes at all (with the possible exception of the vague claim of his two live-in lovers), but I am positive that he had absolutely no regret or remorse for anything he did. Why? Because he spoke freely of things related to his crimes, merely avoiding the bad parts. He happily told us about his wolf paw tattoo and drew it for us, never mentioning that he'd branded it on his victims. He was happy to natter on about his religious faith, completely untroubled by the fact that he'd used it to brainwash children and was now trying it again on us.

If he truly felt that what he'd done was wrong, he probably wouldn't have been able to enjoy such reminders. But he did. He happily talked about his love of tech and the Internet. He talked about how age meant nothing when it came to love and used his own multiplicity to try and rope M.D. in. He had absolutely no shame. He merely censored his history to avoid driving us off and continued doing exactly what he'd done before.

Did We Fall for It?

Well, sort of. We didn't believe much of anything he said, certainly not that he had supernatural powers or that a ghost told him about our trauma history. Tristan was emotionally sensitive and intelligent, but his writing skills lagged behind, to the point that Sneak flat-out didn't understand what he was saying sometimes. It seemed like incoherent nonsense, so ze just ignored it.

However, since we didn't know the nature of his crimes, we didn't realize that he was trying to manipulate us either. We thought he merely had very poor social skills. I actually underestimated his intelligence, passing him off as rambling and incoherent, when in reality, he was making strategic steps to undermine our sense of reality and convince us of total nonsense.

Unfortunately for him, the underestimation seems to have gone both ways—he mistook Sneak's politeness for credulous belief, and M.D.'s age for pliability. He didn't get a foothold into our head, and he didn't establish a sense of control over us. All he achieved was hurting Sneak's feelings, which is still not okay, but a minor setback in the scheme of things. Ze is already bouncing back, and feeling much better.

Ze is taking a break from penpals for a while, though.

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Due to the nature of Tristan's offenses, early newspaper articles covering his case were deleted from the Internet to protect the privacy of his victims. However, before that came to light, enterprising newshounds at scaredmonkeys.com collated these early stories. I have chosen to insert screen-caps, so my words can be fact-checked, but at the same time, I have censored them to protect the girls' privacy.

Because these screen-caps are hard to read, you may also read them online at: https://lb-lee.dreamwidth.org/824752.html

Appendix A

Re: [redacted] & [redacted] (16 & 15) Spring Branch, TX Last seen 2/11/10-
« **Reply #2 on:** February 23, 2010, 04:24:45 PM »

This is very disturbing.

http://herald-zeitung.com/story.lasso?ewcd=cadec97ec5ec5141
Parents still searching for missing teenagers

By Bryan Shettig
The Herald-Zeitung
Published February 20, 2010

Two Spring Branch teenagers have been missing for a week and law enforcement have asked their mother not to contact the woman she believes enticed them to run away.

[redacted] and [redacted], ages 16 and 15, are both students at [redacted] School and left their home between last Thursday night and Friday morning when a stranger picked them up outside the house, Anne F[redacted] said.

The girls told some classmates they were going to California and others that they were going to Florida. The girls met a 22-year-old woman, whose screen name is "Tristan" on an online role-playing game and decided to meet her in person.

The woman, who lives in San Diego, Calif., has called the family and even asked, "how she can help."

"I want my daughters back, that's how she can help," Anne F[redacted] said. "The longer it takes, the more worried we get."

Anne F[redacted] said Comal County Sheriff's detectives, who are investigating the case and have listed the two girls as runaways, told her not to speak to the woman anymore.

[redacted] started role-playing online about eight years ago, Anne F[redacted] said, and she originally supported her daughter.

"We moved around a lot for work, so I thought it would help her stay in touch with people and could be a creative outlet," she said. "But eventually it went south."

Anne F[redacted] said her daughter would not tell her parents what Web site she role-played on, but it was not a traditional video game, rather a writing game where participants wrote stories for each other to play through.

The games, which feature a shamanistic theme, spilled over onto online chatting, F[redacted] said, where players couldn't be regulated by a Web site.

[redacted] then started calling "Tristan" in December, racking up phone bills —9,000 minutes talking with her in December and 11,000 minutes in January, Anne F[redacted] said.

F[redacted] said she pays phone bills online and didn't look at all the minutes those months.

When [redacted] stayed on the computer most of Christmas break and didn't interact much with friends and famly, Anne said she got worried. Soon after, she and her husband, Hollis [redacted], took their child's computer away.

In a diary [redacted] kept from that time, she wrote "taking away her computer and all her friends was unacceptable," Anne F[redacted] said.

"She's a very intelligent girl and very mature," F[redacted] said. "We thought she had control over the game, but eventually it ended up controlling her."

[redacted] is with her sister [redacted], who F[redacted] said, went along to protect [redacted] and take care of her. [redacted] was not into the role-playing until recently, her mother said, after a relationship ended and she became "very depressed."

She moved into [redacted]'s room, changed the way she dressed and a family member told the mother [redacted] got "very excited when [redacted]'s online friends accepted her."

The pair are believed to be on their way to San Diego and have about $1,000 between the two of them, Anne F[redacted] said.

The family also believes the unknown San Diego woman has given the pair untraceable cell phones.

The family has hired private detectives to help find the girls and have been raising money through a Facebook.com page titled "MISSING GIRLS: [redacted] and [redacted]."

"It's been amazing, the support we've got," Anne F[redacted] said. "I've heard from people I haven't seen since I was 10 years old. It's given me a lot of strength."

Parents are urging residents with any knowledge of the girls' whereabouts to contact the Comal County Sheriff's Office at (830) 620-3400. The girls are both about 5-feet 3-inches tall. [redacted] has blonde hair, while [redacted] has brown hair. The girls sometimes speak in British accents and often wear zip-up sweatshirts.

Logged

Brothers and Sisters, I bid you beware/Of giving your heart to a dog to tear -- Rudyard Kipling

One who doesn't trust is never deceived...

Appendix B

Re: [redacted] (16 & 15) Spring Branch, TX Last seen 2/11/10-
« **Reply #1 on:** February 19, 2010, 02:47:24 PM »

http://www.mysanantonio.com/news/Teens_possibly_ran_away_after_role-playing.html

Internet role-playing cited after girls vanish
February 18, 2010

By Jennifer R. Lloyd - Express-News

Parents believe their two teen daughters ran away from their Spring Branch home last week after becoming absorbed in Internet role-playing involving witchcraft and vampirism.

The two [redacted] School students — [redacted], 16, and [redacted], 15 — left home between 9 p.m. Feb. 11 and early morning last Friday, said Anne F[redacted], the girls' mother.

The Comal County Sheriff's Office has listed the teens as runaways, Lt. Mark Reynolds said.

Reynolds said officers are working to keep agencies posted that may be able to help locate the sisters.

Anne F[redacted] believes someone else assisted the teens in running away. The two took money, passports, school records, health records and Social Security cards, Anne F[redacted] said.

"Somebody has helped them because we live in the country, and they didn't take our cars," Anne F[redacted] said. "There was evidence that somebody has picked them up outside of the gate or outside of our fence, and we still don't know who that person was."

Desperate for news of their two teens, the oldest of five, the family has hired a private investigator from San Antonio.

About 4,100 friends and family members also have sought to aid in the search by joining a Facebook page titled, "MISSING GIRLS: [redacted] and [redacted]."

The girls had told some friends at school that they were going to take a bus to California and others that they were going to take a bus to Florida, said Anne F[redacted].

The mother believes a woman in San Diego, who [redacted] frequently role-played with and called, may hold clues to the girls' whereabouts.

Anne F[redacted] said phone records show [redacted] and the woman spoke for about 20,000 minutes during January and February and that the girls might have received packages of clothing from the woman.

Anne F[redacted] said both she and the police have spoken with the woman in California since the girls' disappearance.

The woman met [redacted] on a Web site about witchcraft and shamans after posting a blog calling for role-playing participants, Anne F[redacted] said. The woman told Anne F[redacted] that [redacted]'s role-playing often included vampirism and was bloody, gory and dark.

"We really think [redacted] has kind of become delusional, and she equates herself with the Internet character that she has created," Anne F[redacted] said.

Anne F[redacted] said her daughter's role-playing character was named "Snow," someone [redacted] described as cold, unforgiving and beautiful. She also believes [redacted] went with her sister to take care of her and keep her safe.

"In this diary, ([redacted]) said her Internet friends were her true friends," Anne F[redacted] said. "We'd been getting on her about spending so much time on the Internet and not doing anything, not being with friends. She's a junior in high school, and she doesn't have a social life."

Anne F[redacted] said she and her husband, Hollis, took [redacted]'s computer away at the end of winter break but gave it back to her a few days later.

but gave it back to her a few days later.

"We think she just kind of snapped then, like we were taking her life away. She said that was unacceptable," Anne F[redacted] said.

Logged

" Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts." - Daniel Moynihan

Appendix C

[redacted] & [redacted] (16 & 15) Spring Branch, TX Last seen 2/11/10(Found Safe)
« **on:** February 17, 2010, 12:14:49 PM »

http://www.woai.com/news/local/story/Family-says-missing-girls-lured-away-by-woman/4snryS-m4U6Esk0rDPGLKA.cspx
(Video Available)
Family says missing girls lured away by woman they met online
Reported by: Demond Fernandez

The girls' mother, Anne F[redacted], told News 4 WOAI she has not seen her daughters [redacted], 16, and [redacted], 15, since last Thursday. (WOAI.com)

SPRING BRANCH, Texas – [redacted] and [redacted]'s family is very worried right now. They believe the teenage girls were coerced into running away by an adult the teens met online on a role-playing website.

The girls' mother, Anne F[redacted], told News 4 WOAI she has not seen her daughters [redacted], 16, and [redacted], 15, since last Thursday. Family members believe the girls ran away to San Diego, California to meet a woman who goes by the online character name "Tristan."

"This person online has advised them, told them what to do, what to take, and how to avoid detection," F[redacted] said.

F[redacted] is convinced the girls now have untraceable cell phones and may be traveling by bus to meet the 22-year-old woman. F[redacted] says the woman who's been talking to her daughters claims she is an Indian Shaman who likes tarot cards, witchcraft, and dark sorts of things.

"I'm afraid for them," F[redacted] said of her daughters. "This person has not been completely forthcoming with us. She keeps feeding us tidbits."

The Comal County Sheriff's Office and police in California are investigating. Anyone with information on the missing teenagers is encouraged to call police.

F[redacted] says she just wants her daughters back home safely.

"We really just are worried. We want to hear from you."

« Last Edit: March 18, 2010, 03:44:47 PM by MuffyBee »

Logged

" Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts." - Daniel Moynihan

Appendix D

Re: [redacted] & [redacted] (16 & 15) Spring Branch, TX Last seen 2/11/10(Found Safe)
« **Reply #15 on:** March 18, 2010, 03:50:53 PM »

http://herald-zeitung.com/story.lasso?ewcd=84d97d605185f006
Spring Branch runaways back with family
Wednesday, March 17, 2020

Two teenage sisters who ran away from home to California to meet up with a woman they met online are now back in Comal County. They returned by their own choice.

[redacted] and [redacted], ages 16 and 15, left home Feb. 11 after going to bed, said their mother, Anne F[redacted].

They told classmates they were going to Florida or California to meet a woman they knew from an online role-playing game.

Family spoke to the San Diego woman, who goes by the name "Tristan," on the phone, F[redacted] said, but Comal County Sheriff's Office investigators told her to refrain from speaking to the woman.

Phone calls resumed, however. F[redacted] said her relatives spoke to the woman, and F[redacted] was told Tristan had warrants out for her arrest. It was unclear to F[redacted] on Tuesday what agency has warrants out for the woman's arrest or on what charges.

Family members bought plane tickets for [redacted] and [redacted] and they both boarded a flight from San Francisco on Sunday evening, F[redacted] said. The girls said they were returning to "protect" their friend in California.

Both girls are [redacted] School students.

The teens had dyed their hair in California and were using aliases, F[redacted] said.

They are now staying with relatives, and refuse to speak to their mother. Despite that, F[redacted] said she is glad they are home.

"We're just trying to get help for them," F[redacted] said. "They're safe here. I'm really glad they're back."

[redacted] started role playing online about eight years ago, F[redacted] said, but wouldn't tell her parents which Web site she was using. The games soon turned more private as she started playing with people through chat services, where Web site administrators couldn't monitor them, F[redacted] said.

[redacted] started calling "Tristan" in December, racking up phone bills – 9,000 minutes worth in December and 11,000 minutes in January, F[redacted] said.

Soon after, Anne F[redacted] and her husband, Hollis [redacted], took their child's computer away.

In a diary [redacted] kept from that time, she wrote, "taking away her computer and all her friends was unacceptable," Anne F[redacted] said.

The parents believe the woman gave the girls cell phones and paid for them to be picked up at their Spring Branch home.

Logged

" Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts." - Daniel Moynihan

Appendix E

Re: [redacted] & [redacted] (16 & 15) Spring Branch, TX Last seen 2/11/10(Found Safe)
« **Reply #14 on:** March 18, 2010, 03:47:40 PM »

http://www.postandcourier.com/news/2010/mar/17/girls-back-in-texas-after-learning-of-warrants/

Girls back in Texas after learning of warrants
Wednesday, March 17, 2010

A Charleston family's two missing nieces have returned home to Texas after running away to the West Coast and eluding authorities for more than a month, relatives said Tuesday.
[redacted] and [redacted] flew home from the San Francisco area Sunday night after learning that investigators had obtained arrest warrants to charge a California woman with helping them run away, family members said.

"When the girls heard the news they got very, very mad," said uncle Dan M[redacted], a Charleston real estate agent. "They came home thinking that maybe that would lead to the warrants being vacated."

Whether that happens remains to be seen. In the meantime, the girls are staying with relatives in the Lone Star State but have refused to speak with their parents or return to their home in Spring Branch, Texas, said Anne F[redacted], their mother and M[redacted]s sister.

Anne F[redacted] a Charleston native, said the girls blame her for getting "their best friend" in trouble with the law. [redacted], 16, and [redacted], 15, met the San Diego woman on the Internet through role-playing games involving witchcraft. Their family is convinced the woman helped the teens prepare to run away on Feb. 11 and assisted them while they were gone.

"I'm so happy my girls are back and that they are alive and well," their mother said. "I wish I could go to them and give them a big hug, but they don't want to see me. It's very hard."
Family members heard nothing from the sisters until early March, when they contacted relatives on their father's side to say they were safe. They wouldn't reveal where they were or discuss why they left. Before leaving, the girls turned off their cell phones, cleaned out their bank accounts and left with their passports, Social Security cards, health records and school files, F[redacted] has said.

Phone records show thousands of minutes worth of phone calls between [redacted] and the San Diego woman in the two months leading up to their disappearance, family members said. The girls also received a package from her shortly before they left, they said.

Police and child welfare workers interviewed the girls on Monday, their mother said, but she has not yet been briefed on what they revealed.

Logged

" Everyone is entitled to his own opinion, but not his own facts." - Daniel Moynihan

Kidnapper, Cult Leader, Penpal

For almost ten years, LB Lee has been making comics and zines about being multiple--many people living in one body. They've written on the positive sides, the neutral sides, and the difficult sides, trying to focus on multiples as everyday people.

But what happens when multiples are cult leaders?

Sneak, a young member of LB, got a plural prison penpal named Tristan (legally known as Desiree Hämm) in 2014. In February of 2017, ze discovered that the reason Tristan was in jail was that he had kidnapped, sexually assaulted, and branded two teenage girls, who he'd persuaded to run away from home and move cross-country to live with him after building an online role-playing shamanism cult.

Tristan, sadly, is not LB's first steer at the cult rodeo. They had close shaves with two other cult leaders within their first month of joining the online plural community in 2007, and in 2014, they were interviewed by *the Daily Dot* to weigh in on the cults of Andy Blake. They discovered that this was an ongoing problem, and not restricted to online.

Whether they're claiming supernatural abilities, roping people into their cosmic headspace battles, or convincing followers of their importance and cosmic fate, cultiples are bad news. *Cultiples #1* introduces folks to the behavior of these predators, their tricks of the trade, and how to oust them before they take over a group. It also uses Tristan Grey as a case study in these tactics and behavior.

Knowledge is power! Stay safe out there!

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https://www.etsy.com/shop/MadComics / https://gumroad.com/lb_lee
https://www.patreon.com/LB_Lee